



ICA Newsletter - Spring 2008

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Introduction

Welcome to the spring newsletter. The recent ICA Board reflected on supporting the activities of ICA in meeting the expectations of our membership. The ICA Board faces significant challenges in the years ahead to provide a service to our member institutions which face the challenge of an ever changing society that strives to keep pace with world events. This newsletter reminds you of upcoming events and outlines recent decisions of the Board.

ICA-NASILGC Annual Conference 2008: Moving from the Sciences of Agriculture to the Sciences of Life; an international perspective

To be held at the University of Missouri from 5 to 8 April 2008,

This Conference will focus on the following themes

- Defining the Life Sciences Institution
- Curriculum Innovation in Life Sciences
- Change Management for the Life Sciences Institution

It is not too late to register, go to <http://cafnr.missouri.edu/nasulgc/>

ECHAE 2008: Developing Roadmaps for European Life Science degrees; competences, quality, employability

To be held at the University of Lleida, Spain from 2 to 5 September 2008

This conference will focus on the following themes:

- The job market: for life science graduates in the EU
- Improving the employability of graduates: case studies
- Competences, what graduates should know and be able to do, and how to develop them to enhance employability
- Quality issues: assessing learning outcomes
- Meeting new demands for staff development

Send an Abstract for a presentation to relex@ugc-etsea.udl.cat by 15 April. See the website at <http://www.9echae.udl.cat/> - registration details coming soon.

Welcome new members

We are delighted to support the applications of Holar University College, Iceland, Agricultural University of Iceland and Aarhus University Denmark as new members of ICA. ICA needs new members! If you know of an institution who you think should be invited to join ICA please contact Simon Heath (clues@abdn.ac.uk).

ICA Membership Survey

Last year ICA undertook a survey of current and potential members to investigate how we might enhance our services to members. Martyn Warren (University of Plymouth) with ExCo colleagues reviewed the results of the survey and wrote a report. The recommendations were discussed at the recent ICA Board meeting. The critical recommendations relate to policy issues, marketing of ICA, communications and development of ICA activities.

It was agreed that ICA should continue to have a broad remit focusing on activities to meet the expectations of senior management as well as the broader constituency of staff within our institutions. However, we agreed that in planning activities we should pay more attention to addressing the specific needs of the different target groups in the ICA constituency. In the survey many respondents below senior management were unaware of the role of ICA. ICA should develop activities which excite these target groups as the former DEMETER and AFANet projects had done.

In respect of improving communications it was agreed that we need to work with other groups such as IROICA to provide a robust network of ICA representatives at the institutional level.

It is the view of the Board that the main role of ICA is to support networking and provide a meeting place for professional updating.

In the Member survey the current ICA activities most highly rated were:

- Stimulus and support for education, research and knowledge transfer
- Professional updating through ICA's conferences and workshops
- Participation in externally-funded collaborative projects
- Opportunity for senior managers to discuss strategic issues

The most popular options for further improving ICA's value were:

- Create a searchable databases of expertise in research and teaching/learning capabilities of ICA members, to support development of collaborative opportunities
- Developing research networks which cross the boundaries of disciplines and professional societies
- Facilitate international accreditation of degree programmes, including joint and double degrees.
- Interaction with EU – lobbying to promote the discipline area and the interests of members, informing members on developing European Commission programmes

It was agreed that it was not realistic to consider developing databases of expertise in research because research workers already have well established networks. In addition for EU projects there were already well established agencies to help research workers find partners.

ICA supported networks should have a specific focus and be project based. The former DEMETER and AMEU projects were good examples of effective networks established by ICA. The possibility of setting up regional networks to address specific issues in a region was also a possibility.

ICA as a Consultancy Agency

ICA is seeking to provide better service to its members. One possibility is through providing a consultancy service under the ICA banner. Jan Hron (Board member) and Pavel Kovar from the Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague (CULS) will evaluate the possibility of establishing such a consultancy service. It was agreed that a database of ICA consultants/experts should be a part of the ICA member database. The experts should submit a brief CV which should indicate the expert's expertise in the chosen area. The basis on which an institution would access the consultancy services needs further development although it was agreed that the service should be paid for. It has not been decided if the service would be available only to ICA members or to all institutions with ICA members getting a discount.

ICA Website Developments

Ed Rosa (Board member from the Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro) has had discussions with a company with regard to developing the ICA Website. The ICA Board agreed that Ed Rosa should lead a task force to develop the Website. The other members of the Task Force are Irene Mueller (BOKU), Martyn Warren (Plymouth) and a representative from IAAS who had developed the innovative IAAS website. We look forward to exciting developments in this area in the near future.

ExCo stands down

The role of the Executive Committee (ExCo) was discussed at the recent Board meeting. It was agreed that since the Board had been set up, there had been some difficulty in defining the relationship between the ExCo and the Board. The idea had been that the Board would set the policy which would be executed by the ExCo. However, the ExCo did not have executive powers. If there was to be an Executive Committee it should be made up of Board members with the remit to act on behalf of the Board between Board meetings.

It was agreed that the previous envisaged role of the ExCo could be better carried out by Task Forces set up on a project basis with a clear remit, start and end date. Each Task Force will be led by a member of the Board who would act as a champion for the issue to be addressed by the Task Force. An example would be the conduct of the ICA Membership Survey which had been conducted by the ExCo acting in all but name as a Task Force. Another example of a Task Force is the Quality Project Co-ordinating Committee addressing the possibility of ICA becoming an accreditation agency.

It was agreed that the current ExCo should be suspended and an election to broaden the membership of the Board. If this is agreed at the General Assembly at ECHAE 2008 a proposal would be put to amend the ICA statutes to take account of this new structure.

Balanced Budget for ICA

The budget has not been balanced (significant deficit) in recent years. The Board decided in 2007 that it would try to achieve a balanced budget in 2008. Current indications suggest that such is possible; however this is only possible by Board members ensuring that their travel and subsistence is covered by their home institution and not by ICA. In addition the Board has reduced significantly the amount of money available to pay for the work of

Secretary General, secretarial support and associated travel costs. The achievement of a balanced budget requires a dual approach; a reduced spend and responsibility on the Board to seek new approaches to developing alternative funding systems. As indicated above the Board proposes to develop Task Forces that will be made up by ICA members. The Board was heartened by the 129 people from the Membership Survey who volunteered to support the development of ICA activities. In addition all Board members are each attempting to attract 2 new members to ICA during 2008.

Did you miss it? ICA - NASULGC Conference 2007

ICA-NASULGC Conference on the Science and Education of Land Use: a transatlantic, multidisciplinary and comparative approach was held in Washington from 24-26 September 2007. The papers were grouped under Drivers of Land Use Change; Consequences of Land Use Change; Land Use Policy Evaluation; and Land Use Education, Outreach, and Participation. Abstracts, powerpoint presentations and papers can be viewed at: <http://www.nercrd.psu.edu/TALUC/Presentations.html>

In the final wrap up session there was a general consensus that the conference had been successful in bringing together research workers from many domains who would not normally meet. The Conference was truly multidisciplinary. However very few papers rose to the challenge of making a transatlantic comparison, in the main the papers reported on either US or European activities. The Conference was useful in sharing this information, and perhaps out of this conference will come joint activities which could be reported on at future conferences. Certainly the US delegates said that the US should learn from the European integrated approach to land use planning. One issue that was highlighted was the disconnect between the scientists and the decision makers

The Co-Chairs Stephan Goetz from Pennsylvania State University and Floor Brouwer from Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR) are to be congratulated on bringing this conference to fruition. They are preparing two books for publication from the proceedings.

Events 2009 and beyond

- ICA Conference 2009
- ICA-NASULGC Special Topic Conference 2009: Water Policy
This follows in the sequence of conferences: GMOs worldwide: the science and its public perception (2005); the Science and Education of Land Use (2007)
- ICA NASULGC Annual Conference 2010
- GCHERA Conference to be arranged by ICA 2011

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